WORKFORCE vision

ACCOUNTABILITY ● EFFICIENCY ● RESULTS

A Newsletter for County of Orange Employees • Volume 1, Issue 1. November 2002

Making it REAL ●

As an organization that is focused on efficiency, one question we need to constantly ask ourselves is, "Why are we doing what we do?" Asking this question gets to the heart of efficiency, and helps us be more accountable and achieve desired results. The following article provides tips on asking important "Why" questions.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ASKING "WHY"

An important question you can train yourself to ask is, "Why?" In the workplace, we follow various guidelines, rules, and procedures, but don't always know why. While most guidelines, rules, and procedures are important and necessary, there are some that are outdated or that work against the goals and mission of the organization.

Asking, "Why?" helps us learn the reasons and values behind the policies and procedures. Asking, "Why are we doing this?" can prevent us from blindly performing the same tasks over and over again when the reason behind the task has long since vanished. Asking "Why?" is an efficient way to streamline processes, operate more efficiently, and reduce costs throughout the organization.

It is important to avoid doing things because "it's what we've always done." There is nothing wrong with asking, "Why are we doing this?" Organizations need to evolve with the times.

Editor's Message

We are pleased to introduce the new Workforce Vision publication for County of Orange employees. Each quarter, Workforce Vision will bring you important news, information, and tools to support your success. When you are successful, the County is more efficient, accountable, and achieves greater success!

We need to constantly readdress how we do business - this will lead to more efficient practices.

-Adapted from *Positive Leadership,* (800) 878-5331, www.ragan.com

5 STEP PLAN FOR TAKING INITIATIVE

***Taking initiative is important to achieving results** – use this 5-step plan to help demonstrate your initiative in the workplace:*

1. Look for ways to make improvements, and follow through with a plan of action.

2. Focus your suggestions on areas that have the greatest impact on the organization. This doesn't mean that smaller scale suggestions are not necessary and important, but start your examination on bigger issues.

3. Follow up your suggestions with action. Outline and submit your action plan with your suggestions.

4. Step outside of the box. Look for areas of improvement throughout your organization, not just within your own department or business unit. A person who is not directly involved in a program or process can sometimes come up with new and fresh ideas to an old problem.

5. Think through and analyze your suggestions. A well thought out idea will be better received and much easier for people to support. Take time to think about your suggestions - you might even want to first run them by a colleague.

-Adapted from *Executive Leadership* published by National Institute of Business Management

CHARACTERISTICS OF A
MODERN-DAY PIONEER

Today's pioneers, who stretch the limits and push the boundaries in an organization, have 4 characteristics in common:

1. Seeking possibilities
Pioneers have a relentless focus on improvement and opportunity; they capture ideas, read outside their field, and build partnerships with coworkers to help improve the organization. Pioneers visualize and imagine a solution outside the boundaries of "what is possible."

2. Anticipating change
By building partnerships, looking for improvements, and understanding the organization, pioneers can anticipate where the organization and work environment are heading.

3. Challenging assumptions
In the ever-changing business world, it is important to challenge ideas. The difficulty lies not in discovering new ideas, but in escaping from old ones by challenging conventional thinking.

4. Overcoming the fear of failure
This is probably the most formidable foe to true innovation. It is important to always persist and continue on after encountering a setback.

-Adapted from Karen Howells "5 Characteristics of Innovation" LionHeart Consulting, Inc.

5 TRAITS OF GREAT LEADERS

Leaders share many characteristics and traits that help support a successful organization. When assessing your leadership style, remember that great leaders do the following:

1 Cultivate and inspire enthusiasm in employees
Great leaders enlist the cooperation and support of others. Leaders not only understand employees, but also help motivate them to do their very best work.

2 Focus their efforts
Leaders concentrate their efforts on reaching goals and developing a plan on how they are going to succeed.

3 Overcome great difficulties
All good leaders have faced adversity and bounced back to greater glories. Leaders change stumbling blocks into stepping-stones on the path to organizational success.

4 Expect more from themselves than they do from others
Great leaders set an example for employees by demanding more of themselves. They take on more challenges, initiate more programs, and give the full measure of their energies to their work.

5 Have a vision and utmost confidence in themselves to fulfill that vision
Great leaders know what they want to accomplish, visualize its outcome, and devote all their energies to accomplish that vision. Most important, they truly believe in their own capabilities to do this.

-Adapted from *Real Success* by Ken Shelton, Executive Excellence Publishing

4 STEPS TO INNOVATION

Today, innovation means far more than simple technological advancements. Innovation is a new language of those who lead the way - the common currency of successful organizations around the world. Successful innovation requires organizations to take four significant steps:

1 Rejecting the status quo
Embracing innovation often means rejecting the status quo - whether it is products or processes. This is a rule most organizations and people have a hard time following because we've been trained to believe the old saying, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it."

2 Taking risks and accepting failure
The most important part of risk taking is challenging current practices and looking for improvements. Remember, in failure, there are lessons; in perseverance, there are results. Over time, organizations learn from their setbacks.

3 Encouraging employees
Creativity requires a supportive environment - a setting where great ideas can grow. Talk with employees and encourage them to share their ideas. Remember, open communication is an essential part of creating a nurturing environment.

4 Remembering that people, not technology, innovate
People, not processes or technology - will determine the future success of every organization. Technology gives us the answers, but only people can ask the right questions. Remember, only minds with no limits give us innovation.

-Adapted from "Today's Innovators" by Harry J. Pearce is Vice Chairman of General Motors Corporation, www.gm.com

NURTURE EMPLOYEES' PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

Great leaders are always looking for opportunities to help employees enhance their skills and improve performance. If you're dedicated to seeing that the workforce and organization grow professionally, then encourage employee growth by instituting the following techniques:

Decision-making
Don't just include employees in your decision-making process. Take employees through the process, show and explain how you make decisions, what factors affect your judgment, what kinds of questions to ask, and so forth.

Presentations
Ask staff to help you prepare one of your presentations and invite them to sit in and listen to the presentation. After the presentation, discuss what you felt worked, and ways it could have been better.

Exposure
Give assignments that will involve employees in different aspects of the organization. The more employees understand about the organization, the more they will be able to use their knowledge to contribute new ideas and suggestions.

Meetings
Send an employee to a meeting in your place. The employee will learn new things about the organization and your responsibilities within the organization.

-Adapted from *All I Really Need to Know in Business I Learned at Microsoft,* by Julie Bick, Pocket Books

Employee Recognition Program

ARE YOU WORKING WITH A *SUPERSTAR?*

We are working in demanding, results-oriented, high-performance work environments. We are increasingly challenged with balancing the delivery of excellent service with demanding workloads, emergency situations, and critical deadlines. How do we continue to be progressively efficient, effective, and accountable? It is through the excellence of our workforce - individuals who come to work each day striving to make a difference....to contribute to the quality of life in Orange County. These employees are the County's true superstars.

The superstar may be that coworker sitting in the next cubicle who helped you find a solution to a complex problem. It might be your buddy who did a great job covering your workload so you could take that much-needed vacation. It might be the receptionist who is always so cheerful and pleasant to clients. It might even be your supervisor who is so supportive of the team. Our superstars are those individuals who go the extra mile....who provide quality service....who rise to meet challenges with excellence.

But, how often do we recognize these superstars? How often do we let them know that their efforts *do* make a difference? A sincere word of thanks from the right person, at the right time goes a long way. Is there someone you work with who deserves your recognition? Why not take a minute to write a personal note on the back of a Person-to-Person award and present it to that person. You might be surprised at how much it will mean.

If you need more Person-to-Person recognition coasters, contact Marc Gallonio at **834-5010** or email Marc at **marc.gallonio@ocgov.com.** He will be happy to forward you a supply so that you can continue recognizing the superstars with whom you work. Appreciation starts with YOU.

Stars Don't Shout ... They Shine!

LMC LEADING*EDGE*

Labor Management Committees find creative solutions for: resolving Agency/Department level workplace issues; participating in business planning processes; coordinating organizational events; and accomplishing workplace change.

LMC's Getting Involved!

The Community Services Agency's (CSA) LMC has been very busy! Not only are team members meeting regularly to resolve workplace issues, they're also getting involved in a host of other Agency events. Through collaborative efforts between the CSA LMC, representatives from labor and management, the following events have been planned: an Agency picnic, an annual holiday luncheon and a first time ever Employee Recognition ceremony!

The Employee Recognition ceremony was a huge success! All CSA employees were invited to attend the ceremony, which opened with the annual United Way kick-off celebration. Five judges, representing labor and management, selected the winners of the "Constellation" (team) award and "Shining Star" (individual) awards. The winners and the 82 nominees were all recognized for their excellence and their contribution towards meeting CSA's objectives. Congratulations to all who were nominated and awarded!

Keeping Informed and Connected!

Does Probation's LMC make an effort to keep others informed? I'll say they do!! Using the Department's intranet (PROBNET), Probation's LMC members have made it easy for employees to download Workplace Issue (WI) forms and guidelines, and contact LMC members. PROBNET also posts LMC meeting minutes, which include information on current and new workplace issues and PIP updates.

STAYing in STEP
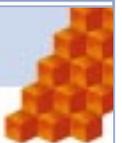
Two thumbs up to County managers and supervisors who recently completed the mandatory PIP Refresher Training! In light of the recent changes and enhancements, the training provided an excellent opportunity to review PIP basics, clarify roles and responsibilities, and get everyone on the same page. Through the course of the training, a number of misconceptions about PIP were clarified.

Several key points are described below in a PIP FAQ format.

9 PIP FAQs

Q: Who is responsible for ensuring that the components of the PIP process are completed on time?

A: PIP is everyone's responsibility and timeliness is a critical aspect of PIP. Employees, supervisors, and reviewers are **all** expected to know review dates and are responsible for ensuring all PIP components are completed in a timely fashion.

Q: Do all Action Plan Specifics boxes on the Performance Planning form need to be filled in?

A: Filling in every box is not required. The only information that is intended to go in these boxes is specific actions to address competencies that both the supervisor and employee agree upon for the **coming** cycle. Nothing should go into these boxes that is a reflection of the past. In addition, these boxes are not intended for listing information such as employee job descriptions.

Q: How many levels of review and signatures are needed for the PIP forms?

A: PIP is a partnership between three parties: the **employee**, **supervisor**, and **reviewer**. These are the only individuals who are involved in the performance planning process and who sign the PIP forms. The only time an additional signature is required is when a supervisor recommends an employee for a merit increase that is more than two steps.

Q: After PIP forms are signed, are they filed at Human Resources?

A: The Performance Planning, Midcycle Coaching, and Improvement Plan forms are **planning** documents that are retained by the employee, supervisor, and reviewer only. The Final Review of Performance Narrative is an *official* document and goes into the employee's official personnel file at their Agency / Department Human Resources.

Q: Are Improvement Plans disciplinary?

A: Improvement Plans are NOT disciplinary. On the contrary, Improvement Plans ARE: 1) a tool to help employees succeed in meeting overall performance expectations, and 2) a planning document developed collaboratively between the employee and supervisor, and sent to the reviewer for review. No other party is involved in establishing an Improvement Plan.

Q: If I take a class and present the information in a staff meeting, is this a satisfactory performance-based PIP goal?

A: At least one PIP goal must be performance-based. For a class to be an acceptable performance-based goal, learning must be applied on the job and have a measurable benefit to the Agency/Department. Therefore, taking a class and sharing information with staff is **not** performance-based. In addition, all PIP goals must:
- Be SMART
- Be collaboratively established between the employee and supervisor
- Meet Agency/Department business objectives

Q: Can I change my PIP goals?

A: Sometimes, circumstances occur beyond our control that may require modifying or changing a goal. If this is the case, the employee and supervisor should **collaboratively** discuss the circumstances and may then modify or change goal(s) as appropriate. The changes should be reflected on the Performance Planning or Midcycle form, signed by both employee and supervisor, and sent to the reviewer for review.

Q: Can my supervisor or reviewer deny my PIP goals?

A: As long as PIP goals are SMART, collaboratively established between employee and supervisor, and meet business objectives, a PIP goal should not be denied. If the reviewer has concerns that an established goal does not meet these criteria, the reviewer cannot change or deny a goal. Instead, the reviewer should address their concerns with both the supervisor and employee, and work collaboratively on reaching a resolution.

Q: Can I receive my PIP award if I complete most, but not all of my PIP goals?

A: To be eligible to receive a PIP award: 1) an employee's overall performance must "meet" or "exceed" core performance expectations, and 2) **all** PIP goals must be achieved. A PIP award is not granted if these expectations are not met.

The above FAQs are intended to further clarify PIP so that it works in the manner intended. Operating with accurate information is essential to successfully achieving our goals and enjoying our jobs more fully!

If you have more questions, you may: consult with your supervisor, contact your Agency/Department Human Resources or CEO/Employee Relations at (714) 834-2857.

Leadership
CORNER

County of Orange Mission Statement

The County of Orange is a collection of dedicated, public-spirited individuals, who together comprise a regional service provider and planning agency committed to maximizing resources and improving the quality of life for residents in Orange County. Our core businesses are public safety, public health, environmental protection, regional planning, public assistance, social services and aviation.

Cynthia Coad,
Chair of the Board of Supervisors

On behalf of the Board of Supervisors, I wish to thank everyone who participated in the LMC process for identifying cost efficiencies for our County. As a result of your efforts, we are well on our way to streamlining operations, cutting costs, and generating revenue to address our budget challenges in the coming years.

The County is committed to building a government that follows a path of continuous improvement. Doing so requires leadership at every level in the organization. We look to all employees for constructive ideas for improvement, innovation, solutions, and achieving results.

I truly believe that it is those who are closest to the day-to-day operations who know best how to achieve excellent government for the County of Orange. Therefore, we count on you, to constantly seek better ways of doing business as we strive to realize our vision of increased efficiency, accountability, and the achievement of results.

Thank you for your efforts and outstanding contributions. I am proud of all that we have accomplished together.

Contact: *714.834.4039 or WorkForce.Vision@ocgov.com*